New York State had a high enough penetration rate overall, at the time of our study, for access to be effective, according to these criteria: 47.1% or 57.3%, outside of New York City, depending on the measure. It is unclear from published sources whether cable reached those underserved groups mentioned above.

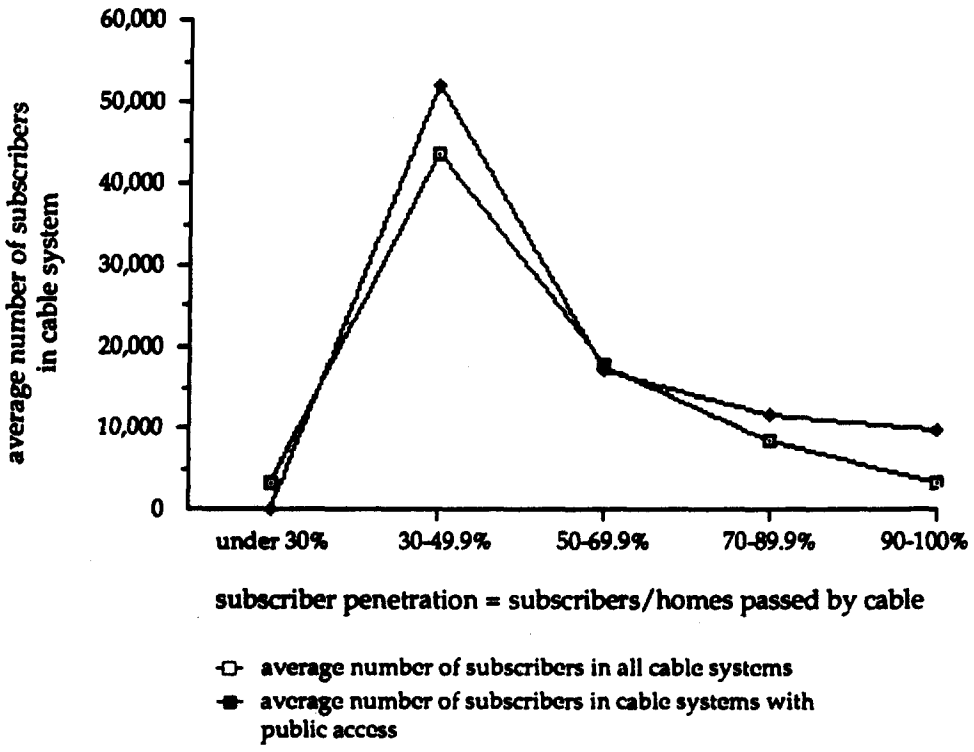
What was the average penetration rate of individual New York State cable systems? Where was penetration rate especially high or low, and what was its relationship to access?

The average penetration rate of individual cable systems in the state was 73.5%. This reflected the high number of small systems in the state.

Where the penetration rate of New York State cable systems was over 70% – in 103 systems, the average number of subscribers was 6,470. These systems served 31% of subscribers, yet only 34% had access. Many of these were older systems located in mountainous areas that were wired for cable so that residents could receive regular broadcast channels. Many had less than 3,500 subscribers, and as noted in the discussion concerning access and cable system size, these systems were exempt from much regulation concerning access and may not have initially seen the need for access.

Systems with lower penetration rates, less than 50%, tended to be large urban systems. Their

Does Cable System Size Affect Penetration Rate?
Does Penetration Rate Vary for Cable Systems with Access?



average size was 32,045 subscribers, and they were equally divided between those with and without access. These included Manhattan, the Bronx, Westchester, the cities of Rochester and Buffalo, and Huntington Township, a dense suburban area on Long Island.

Systems with closer to average or median penetration 50-80%, tended to be medium-sized, averaging 17,956 subscribers. They also had the highest percentage of systems with access. Sixty-one percent of systems with 50-70% penetration had access. They tended to be in small or medium-sized cities or dense suburban communities. These systems served 41% of total subscribers — and 41% of subscribers with access as well.

Systems with access tended to be concentrated in the mid-range of the penetration rate. Systems with very high rates tended to be very small, primarily re-broadcast systems, while systems with very low rates tend to be in large urban or concentrated suburban areas.

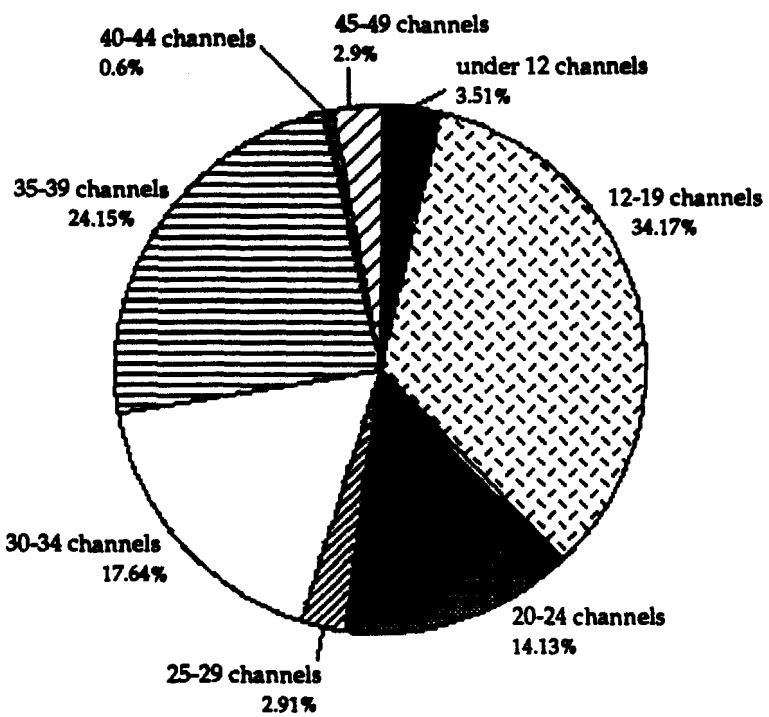
Channel Capacity and Access

Was there adequate channel capacity for access on New York State cable systems? The allocation of programming to cable channels goes to the heart of the argument concerning the public's First Amendment right to access to communications systems.

At the time of our survey, the channel capacity of New York State cable systems was concentrated in a few levels: 31% had 12 channels, 14% had 20-24 channels, 41.7% had 30-40 channels, 2.9% had over 50 channels.

Over half of the systems had 24 channels or less at the time of our survey, but most other subscribers were served by systems with 30 to 39 channels. A fifth of the state's cable subscribers were served by systems with less than 30 channels, and only two percent were served by systems with over 40 channels.

Channel Capacity of New York State Cable Systems

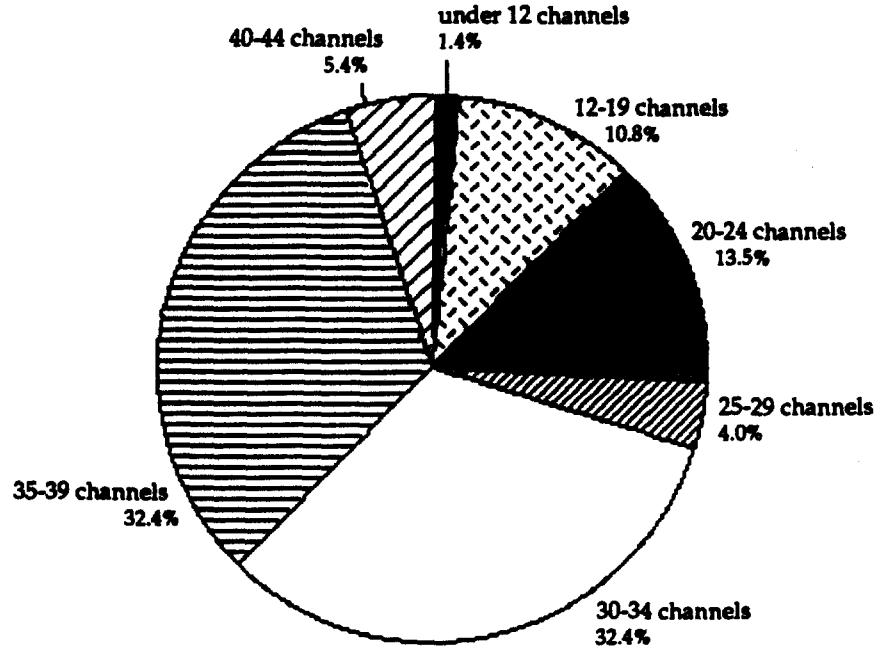


number of channels & percent of total

The systems with 24 or fewer channels tended to be the very small systems, which also did not tend to have access. Only 25.7% of these had access channels. One reason was that many 12-channel systems were filled with *must-carry* programming (existing broadcast channels, whose carriage on cable was required by law), according to the cable operators we interviewed. Our survey was taken when Federal must-carry rules were still in effect, requiring that cable systems carry local broadcast affiliates on basic programming tiers. However, several of these small systems planned upgrades and some mentioned plans for local programming including access channels and equipment. Again, although most New York State cable systems were very small — 51% having 3,500 subscribers, 77% with 24 or fewer channels — these systems served less than 5% of New York State subscribers.

Of the systems with more than 24 channels, 74.2% had access and nearly half of New York State subscribers were served by these systems. So less than one quarter of the state's subscribers were faced with the problem of lack of channel

Channel Capacity of New York State Cable Systems with Public Access



number of channels & percent of total

capacity for access. Also, many systems had unused channels, although some were reportedly technically unusable for video but capable of carrying text programming.

In summary, channel capacity itself seemed not to be a problem for access carriage. Rather, priority of access versus other programming on those channels was the issue.

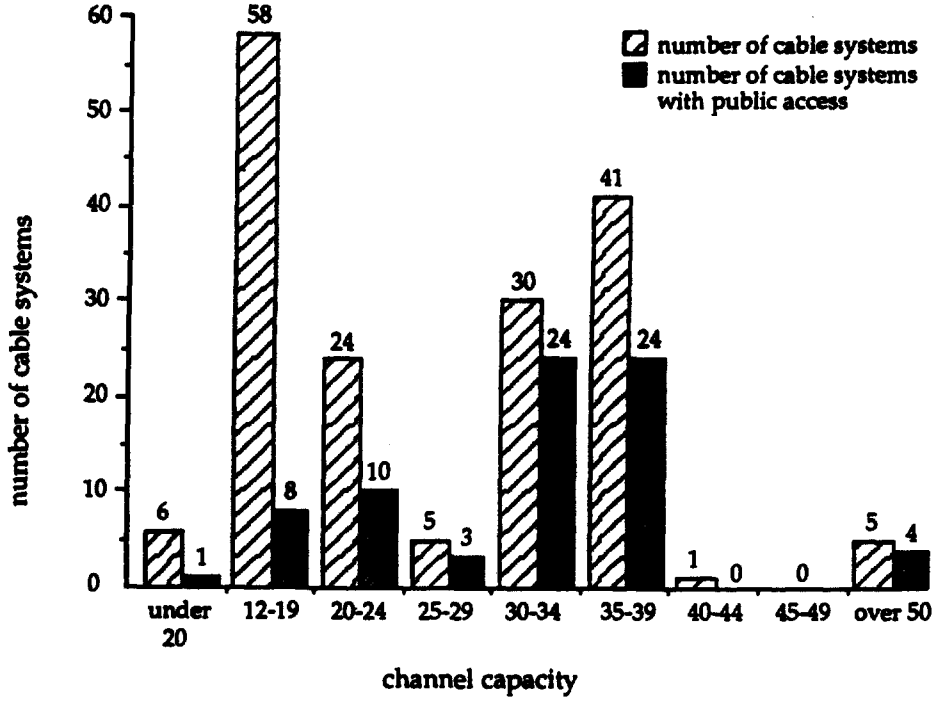
Franchising and Access

The *franchising date* (or year the system was activated) does have some relation to whether a system has public access, probably due to several social and historical factors, including changing regulation concerning access.

Many factors have played a part: the political, community empowerment and free speech movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, the development of portable video equipment in the late 1960s, the growth and maturation of community TV programmers' and producers' groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and most recently the burgeoning use of consumer video equipment by a diverse range of groups and individuals. Some analysts also cite the economic cycles of the cable industry as influencing access provision in franchises.

Systems that began operating in the first twenty years of cable, before 1965, tend not to have

Channel Capacity in New York State Cable Systems

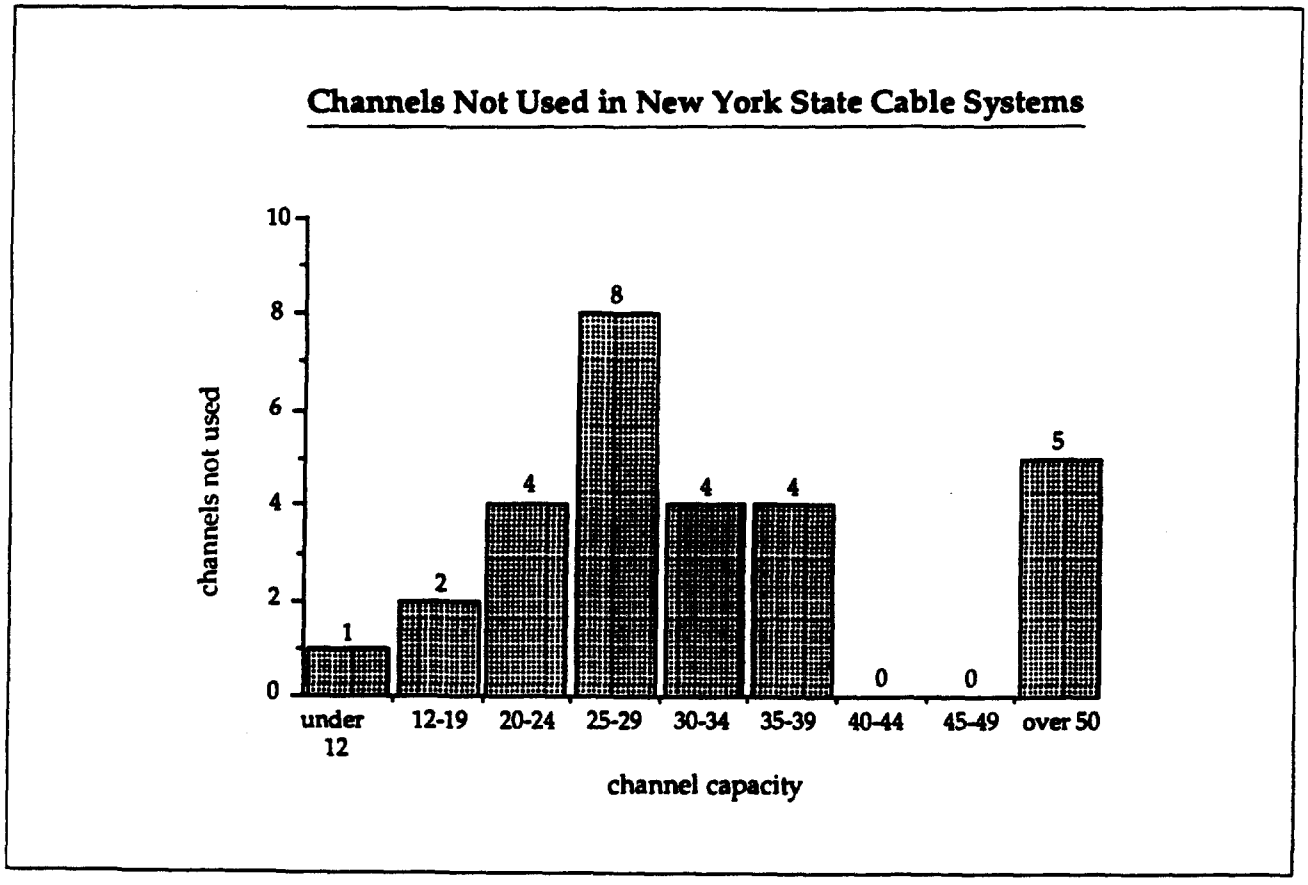


access. These are very small rural systems where cable technology allowed residents to obtain broadcast television programming. From 1965 to 1975, larger systems were franchised. These systems serve the the majority of New York State subscribers. Over half of these systems have access today. The overwhelming majority of systems franchised after 1975 (74%) also had access at the time of our survey, although there was a slight decline in the 1980s in systems with access.

Why did systems franchised between 1965 and 1975 have access? Several factors are probable. One is the social ferment of the time, emphasizing the right of ordinary people to speak about issues that concerned them. Another reason might be that these franchises were initially obtained by local business people who saw the carriage of inexpensive local news and opinion as a public service, as well as a way to obtain approval for their franchises from municipal authorities. Third, some of these franchises fell into the major markets required, by Federal Communications Commission rulings in the early 1970s, to have PEG channels. (Even though the rulings were being challenged in court at the time, it seemed a safer course to some systems to simply institute access.)

The FCC rules caused some franchises signed between 1975 and 1980 to include access. But after those rules were invalidated in court in 1979, some systems decided the expense was not worth the cost, since it was not required.

Why has there been a slight drop in franchises that have access in the 1980s? Some systems used to have access, but have dropped it from their channels. From our interviews, it seems that some cable operators or individual access coordinators



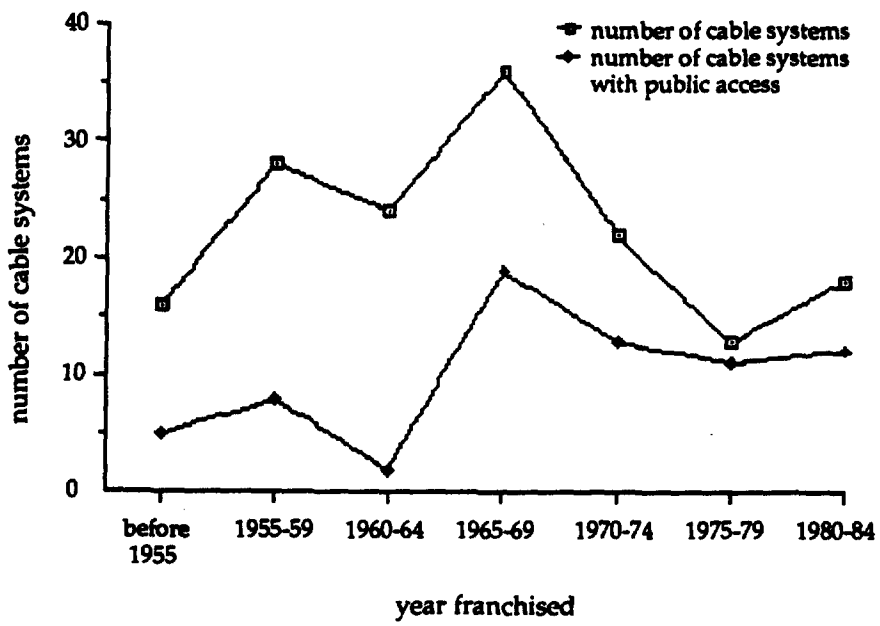
"burned out." Some became disillusioned with the amount of community outreach and training necessary to develop an active access center, and some cable operators tended to want more control over programming on local channels, which they felt contributed to their public image. Rather than open channels to the public, some cable systems offer programming distributed and approved by their MSO, or staff-produced local programming, where they can earn revenues with local advertising, and control or oversee content, style and tone. Another trend is to offer both access and Local Origination programming, and encourage certain access shows to become LO.

Refranchising

Most franchises for cable service are quite long — ten, fifteen, even thirty years. Due to the waves of franchising activity in the past, nearly 60% of New York State cable systems, serving 63% of New York State subscribers, had franchises slated to be renewed between 1985 and 1995. A third were to be renegotiated before 1990. In addition, when a franchise is sold, the granting authority can renegoitiate access provisions. Federal law mandates a three-year study and renegotiating period previous to any refranchising agreement. The future of access in most New York State communities very much depends on the knowledge and awareness of all parties involved in the next few years.

From 1980 to today, access channels and resources have not been required by federal legislation, although access is validated as a legal request by local governments, and, as some see it, even en-

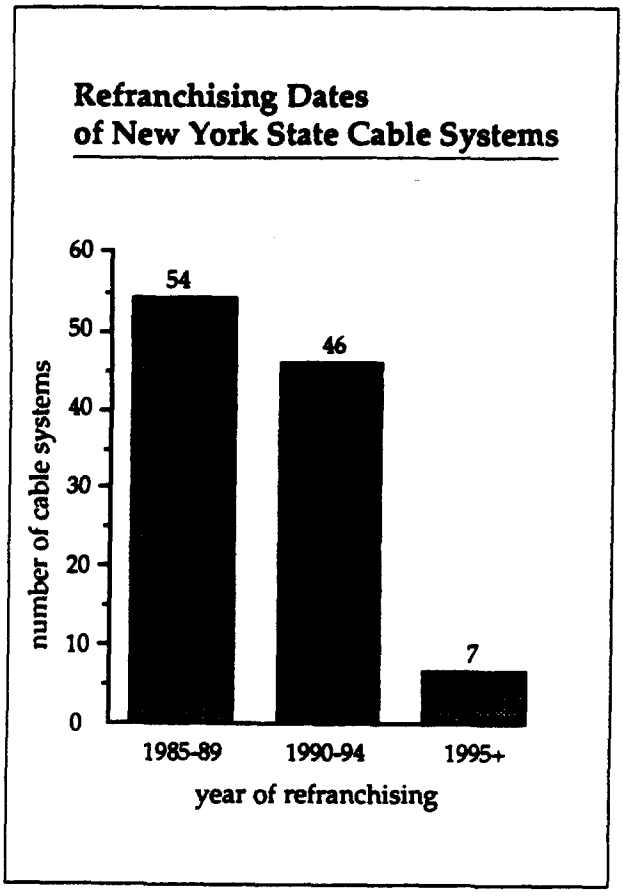
When New York State Cable Systems Were Franchised



couraged by the 1984 Cable Act, and state regulations have been in flux.[12] So the inclusion of access in a franchise in the 1980s is mostly dependent on the interest and tenacity of municipal authorities, citizens groups and the cable company during franchise negotiation. Access is not automatically included in all new franchises.

Conclusion

Whether or not a system has access depends on many factors. From our data, we have shown the effect of the size of the cable system, the year the system was franchised, and state and federal regulation. Other factors that influence whether a system has public access and the extent to which it is active include the franchise between the cable company and the municipality it serves, the amount of community support, interest and involvement in access and in the franchising process, MSO policy and support for access, and interest and support of local cable company managers, programmers and access coordinators. The balance of this report will explore these and other factors.



Notes:

1. TV households comprise 98% of US dwelling units.
2. New York State Commission on Cable Television, 1984.
3. These 159 cable systems served 2,115,400 cable subscribers in the state. The 76 systems with access served 1,373,160 subscribers.
4. The averages are 24,505 subscribers without access and 22,887 with access, the opposite of what previous figures lead one to expect.
5. James W. Roman, *Cablemania: The Cable Television Sourcebook* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), page 255.
6. *Broadcasting /Cable Yearbook,*.
7. These were CATV Properties, Colonial Cablesystems, El Mar Communications, Esic Capital, Mid-Hudson Cablevision, and Selectavision of Cazenovia. A few others are small or mid-sized, based in Pennsyvania, Connecticut, Vermont or Massachusetts.
8. Four of the five largest systems in New York State had access: ATC- Manhattan, ATC-Rochester, Prime Cable's International Cable, and Group W Manhattan. Cablevision Development Systems-Long Island, one of the largest systems in the country, apparently had access programming and services initially, but then cut back in recent years. This was the only cable system in the state that refused to participate in our survey.
9. For 32.5% of New York State MSOs, all systems have access. For 37%, no systems have access, and for 30.4%, some have access and some do not.
10. Penetration rate can be measured in several ways, each providing slightly different information. Penetration rate can be measured statewide in two ways. First, what part of the population of New York State subscribes to cable TV (*subscribers/dwelling units* or *subscribers/households*). Second, what part of those households that could subscribe to cable TV (whose homes or apartments are passed by cable wires) in fact do choose to subscribe (*subscribers/homes passed*). Finally, the penetration rates of local cable systems can be compared: What part of the state's cable systems have what

penetration rates (*subscribers/homes passed* averaged by systems for the state). The first and second are explained in this footnote; the third, in the text.

What part of the New York State population subscribed to cable? In 1984, 30% of New York State households subscribed to cable television. This figure is skewed by the effect of the state's largest city. New York City, with 42.9% of New York State's dwelling units, most not wired for cable, had an overall penetration rate of 8.2%. (In Manhattan, the one borough that has had cable service for nearly two decades, the *subscribers/ dwelling units* penetration rate was 31%.) Outside of New York City, 47.1% of New York State households received cable service.

But other areas of New York State were unwired as well. So another way of measuring the cable penetration rate measures cable subscribers against homes passed — people who could receive cable service if they wished because cable wires pass their homes. Using this measure, the penetration rate statewide was over half. Fifty-seven percent (57.3%) of New York State residents whose homes were passed by cable wiring subscribed to cable TV.

11. Roman, page 129.

12. In 1988, the New York State Commission on Cable TV released Minimum Standards for Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Access." (See Appendix.) Although these had been in preparation since 1980, they were not in effect at the time of our survey.

Chapter 4
Forms of Access Management

One of the major factors that affects the nature of access in any community is the type of organization that manages access.

Cable Operators

Most often, our survey found, the cable operator itself ran the access operation. In New York, 76%, or 58 of the 76 systems with access had their access channels managed overall by the cable operator. But shared access programming was common, where a local institution was responsible for programming the access channel for part of the week, or in one part of the geographic area served by the cable system. In 88%, or 67 systems, access channels were programmed jointly between the cable operator and another institution such as a university, library or non-profit access organization.

Where cable operators ran access, the structure and extent of programming and support varied from a small, rural system where the manager ran a tape to the head-end once a year, to a big city with several full-time access staff and hundreds of hours of programming each week. Operator-managed access was often overseen by a local programming director who may have been also in charge of government and/or educational access, plus the company's own locally originated (and advertiser supported) programming. Depending on the level of support, there may also be a public access coordinator specifically responsible for programming the access channel – and often coordinating production for it.

In addition to sharing staff, access sometimes shared facilities such as portable equipment and studio(s) with other cable operator productions. With all local programming under one roof, certain conflicts were likely to occur, especially when local programming staff operated under conflicting policies from the local government (as written in the franchise) and the cable operator, usually his or her employer. One local program director described a situation in which the franchise gave access users priority for equipment use, yet the company required him to produce 25 hours per week of local programming with the same equipment. Under such conditions, it is difficult to imagine local programming staff providing much encouragement for increased community access use.

Under cable operator management, an average of nine hours per week of public access programming was produced at the time of our survey.

Local Institutions

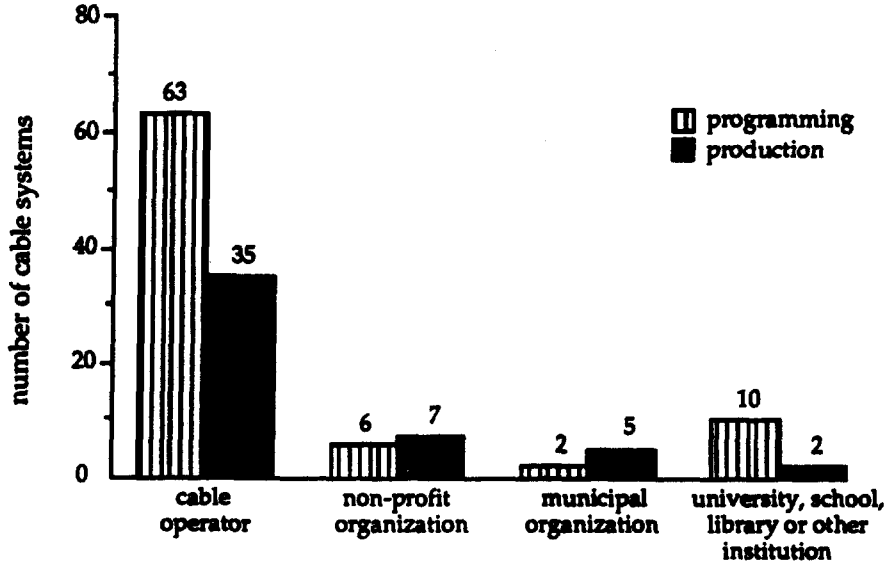
In seven cable systems, 9% of those with access, access was partly or completely run by a local institution such as a college, public school or library. This arrangement varied. For example, the Albany Public Library housed one of that city's access studios; the State University of New York at Fredonia ran the area's entire access operation; and other local institutions produced or programmed a portion of the local access channel. The Tompkins County Public Library programmed its own shows on the Ithaca access channel two nights a week.

An average of 16 hours a week of programming was produced on systems where local institutions were involved in programming the channel — almost double the number produced where cable operators were the sole managers. In addition to increasing programming hours and sometimes providing additional facilities, community institutions usually increased the visibility of access shows through their established publicity mechanisms.

Libraries

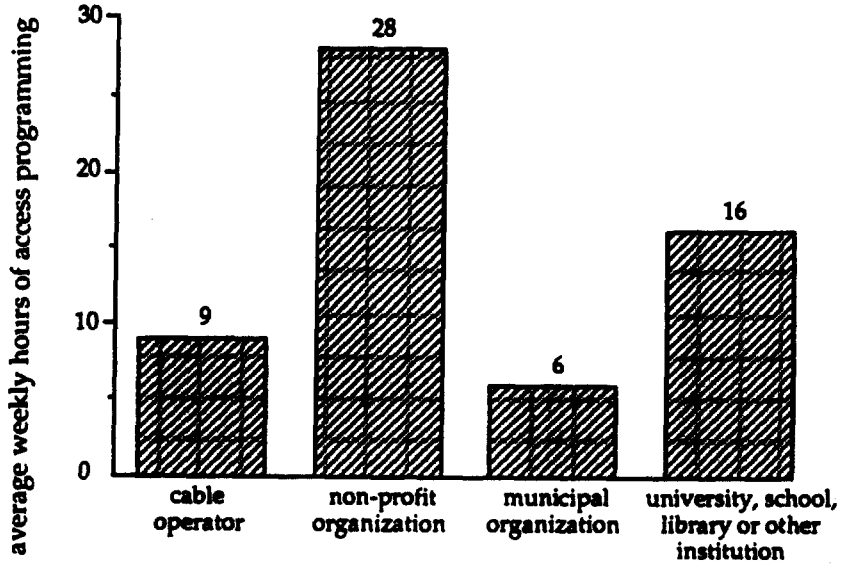
Already an established community information center, the public library played a major role in access in several communities. Most often the library provided production facilities, either as the main production center or studio, or as an ancillary one. In Ithaca and in Albany, the library was responsible for programming the access channels for part of the week. In some places, such as Bethlehem, the public library made its video facilities open to the public, while in others, such as White Plains, the library used its facilities to produce its own programming, such as book reviews and children's shows.

Who Manages Public Access Programming and Production?



who manages public access programming and production

... and Amounts of Public Access Programming by Different Managing Entities



who manages public access programming and production

Schools

Educational access is one of the three types of access that may be outlined in a franchise agreement (along with *public* and *governmental access*). Since many schools, at the time of our survey, already had some video equipment and were involved or interested in teaching television production, a local public school was sometimes designated as the site for the local public access studio. As with colleges and universities, this sometimes meant that only students could actually operate the equipment, and other groups in the community involved themselves as subjects of student productions, or with students acting as crew.

In some communities, a school was the sole site of public access facilities. For example, Classic Cable in Lake George set up the capability for live programming for its public access channel to be originated from three public high schools in Lake George, Ticonderoga and Port Henry. The company itself ran no other access facility. This was the only place in the state where a public school system was the sole manager of access on a cable system. However, where support for access is minimal, a school that has equipment may be the only regular user of access. This was especially true in some smaller communities such as Greenwich, where the local high schools were the only regular producers for the access channel of Battenkill Newchannels.

Another arrangement we found was the shared use of an access facility located in a school between public and educational access users. In Mamaroneck, one of the communities served by UA/Columbia Cablevision in Westchester County, Mamaroneck High School housed the access facility. This was used by the school from 8 am to 3 pm, and by the general community from 3 pm to 11 pm. An advantage of this set-up was that the shared facility could create a focus for unified community support of the facility and access in general. A disadvantage was the potential competition for resources among groups.

Access hours in systems where facilities are shared with institutions

systems	hours per week
LMC-TV (shared with school) 12.5	
Fredonia Cablevision (university only)	15
Potsdam Cable (university only)	30
Gateway (university only)	12
American Cable—Ithaca (shared with library and university)	30
Capitol Cablevision (total)	27
(Albany Library only)	7

Colleges and Universities

A library or a school, a college or university could run an entire access operation including production and programming, be responsible for production and programming for part of the access channel (for example, on certain days of the week), be one of several access facilities open to the public, or run exclusively educational access, with the facility open only to students.

The State University of New York at Fredonia ran access for Fredonia Cablevision, as did Clarkson University for Potsdam Newchannels and SUNY Plattsburgh for Gateway Cablevision. Ithaca College programmed two days a week on the American Community Cablevision access channel (although the college hoped to get its own channel as a result of refranchising).

Municipal Access Organizations

Although a cable operator often served a number of adjoining communities, there were separate franchise agreements with each local government or franchising authority. We found that some municipalities had their own access facilities, supported by the cable operator or the local government itself, or both. Other municipalities provided support services such as outreach to new

access users, or assisted in publicity.

Capitol Cablevision served a number of communities in and around Albany. The municipal government in Guilderland, near Albany, supported the Guilderland Access Council, which ran an access facility out of Guilderland High School. With a head-end into the system, the Guilderland facility could add its cablecasts to reach subscribers in just its own franchise area.

In Westchester County, a number of communities served by UA/Columbia had distinct access channels for their franchise areas in addition to the system-wide access channel, Channel 8. Local governments in these areas provided varying degrees of support, including staff and production facilities, to foster access in their specific communities. This arrangement is worth highlighting, as MSOs that hold many adjacent franchises do not always allow each town its own local channel.

What kinds of programs did these municipal and municipally assisted centers produce? Scarsdale Access, a municipal access center open to the public, was in its first year of operation in Scarsdale Village Hall. Though only producing two programs a month, Coordinator Kevin Lauth noted these programs: "NYGAARD," a view of the work of local sculptor Dr. Kaare Nygaard; "Volunteer Fire Department," on location at a training exercise; and "A Talk With G. Randall Keehle," with the chairman of the National Nuclear Freeze Campaign. In White Plains, 15 hours per week of access and municipal programming was produced at the facilities of the White Plains Cable TV Access Commission. Executive Director Frederic Strauss listed as representative programs "Miss Pat's Patio," a weekly program in which puppets and games taught children about the community; "The Vital Years," a weekly health program targeted at mid-life viewers; and a special, "Burke Wheelchair Athletic Meet," a documentary about this annual White Plains event.

In Webster, a municipal access organization ran advertising and promotion of the access channel, while American Cablevision of Webster ran production and programming. In Great Neck, the town hired an access coordinator to foster the growth of access on the Cox Cable system.

One of the best developed municipal access organizations in New York was in Lockport, a town north of Buffalo, served by Jones Intercable in Lancaster. In order to manage access, the city government formed the Lockport Community Cable Commission, appointing a board of directors and hiring an access coordinator. The Commission was supported by a combination of resources and funds from the cable operator and municipal funds. In the franchise, the cable operator agreed to provide a certain amount of equipment and maintenance. The city of Lockport decided to use the 3 per cent franchise fee from Jones Intercable to further support access — providing salary, more equipment, improvements, publicity, and seed grants for community productions. The Lockport facility featured a diverse range of community involvement — from young people to senior citizens, and from local artists to veteran journalists. It produced about eight hours a week of programming, and its activities and programming were well covered in the local newspaper.

Non-profit Access Corporations

Non-profit access corporations are sometimes set up to directly run access, sometimes to provide support services. In newer franchises, it is common to include provisions for setting up a *third party, non-profit access corporation.* The idea behind this is to separate the running of access from direct control by the cable operator, local government, or other local institution. Typically run by a board of directors made up of representatives from community organizations and institutions and other individuals, a non-profit access corporation can gain support of these diverse constituencies without the pressure of being responsible to one over others. This independence can be crucial to attracting the widest diversity of access users, and to long term survival based on broad support. Access in five cable systems in New York state were partially supported by non-profit access corporations. Only Woodstock was completely run by one.[1]

The entire access operation for the Woodstock franchise area of Kingston Cablevision was run by Woodstock Access TV (WATV). WATV contracted with Media Bus, a local non-profit media center, to provide technical assistance and

training to run the studio for Channel 6. Channel 6 described itself as "self-service" television. While unstaffed, the studio was open for people to come in and make their own shows. Woodstock produced about 24 hours of programming per week.

In Schenectady, a group of local residents and organizations organized the Schenectady Access Council (SAC) to fight for inclusion of access provisions in the franchise with Schenectady Cablevision. Access was run by the cable operator, with its studio and editing facilities housed in an old school. The role that SAC played during the life of the franchise was one of support. Money collected through memberships and fees for training were used to buy equipment beyond that provided by the cable operator (including better cameras and a VHS editing system), and SAC also provided training to community residents. Schenectady produced 56 hours of programming a week — more than any other system besides Manhattan and Group W Cable in New York City.

Notes:

1. Since our survey was completed, the New York City franchise now specifies a third party non-profit access organization for each borough, with a Board of Directors appointed by each Borough President.

Chapter 5
Equipment and Training

At its most basic, public access encompasses only access to channel time. But in reality, access to video equipment is a necessary ingredient for any community to produce programs for an access channel. In its minimum standards for access in New York State, the State Commission on Cable Television does not require any basic standards for provision of equipment. This means that the equipment that is purchased and maintained for access use is negotiated between the local franchising authority and cable operator.

Of the 76 cable systems providing access channel time in New York State, 48 systems, or nearly two thirds, provided some equipment for access production.

Kinds of Equipment

The amount and kind of equipment available to the public varies, depending on the franchise agreement between the cable operator and local government. The factors affecting this agreement include the size of the community, the desirability of the franchise area to the cable operator (e.g. more affluent areas are more likely to receive greater offers from cable operators vying for the opportunity to wire potentially lucrative areas), the level of public involvement and pressure, and the commitment and sophistication of local government officials in demanding appropriate levels of funding for equipment and maintenance.

The main components of access production equipment are studios, portable (location) cameras and recording decks, and editing equipment.

Video Production: Studios and Portable Equipment

Studio production is a mainstay of public access programming. The relative simplicity and economy of time required to set up studio talk shows that can be shot live (or as if live) makes a studio a major asset in attracting wide community use. This is reflected in our study in the fact that 43 of the 48 facilities with equipment had studios (slightly more than the 40 that had portable equipment). Of those 43 with studios, approximately 75% were able to cablecast directly into the cable system. The ability to produce such live programming is essential to make access timely and immediate. For example, a live program can respond to a community crisis within hours or days and thus play a unique and important role in local dialogue. A live feed also makes it possible for viewers to call in during a program, increasing the opportunity for community discussion. The live local election returns cablecast by East Hampton High School producers offered one example of this. Another was the almost-live Town Meetings shown in Woodstock.

Slightly less than half of the access studios with live feeds were set up to receive calls on the air. Those systems with call-in capacity had more programming, averaging 18.5 hours per week, compared with 11 hours for those without call-ins.

More than four out of five (80%) of the systems providing equipment had at least one portable deck available, while an average of two portapaks were available in the state's cable systems. Twenty-seven systems had 3/4-inch decks for access, 21 systems had half-inch decks, and eight had both. Most — twenty-eight — systems had one (12) or two (16) cameras used for location, studio or both. Only a handful had more.

Editing

The ability to edit tapes is essential to producing more interesting programming and attracting and retaining community producers wanting to do more than live programming. Short "intro," "outro" or "roll-in" segments taped at other locations can go a long way towards spicing up a studio show. Almost three-quarters of the cable systems with facilities had some editing equipment available for access — most (22) had one editing set-up; seven facilities had two set-ups.

Although increasing numbers of access operations were using half-inch equipment by the time we did our survey, a greater number (28) of systems had 3/4-inch editing. Thirteen had half-inch editing, and seven had both. One system, Capitol Cablevision in Albany, had half-inch to 3/4-inch editing. This inter-format editing system

can facilitate cheaper and easier production but maintain a higher quality finished product for cablecast.

Where editing equipment was provided, we found much more programming on access channels. There was an average of 18 hours of programming on systems with editing equipment, and only seven hours on systems with none.

Hours of access and kinds of equipment

kinds of equipment	average hours per week
all equipment	13.3
portable equipment only	13.8
studio only	15.9
studio and portable	17
studio with live feed	18.5
editing and portable	18

Who Uses the Equipment?

In several places, the equipment was not really accessible to the public, but instead was used by staff people to cover community events. Parades and sports events were common. Cable operators usually explained that they were worried about inexperienced people operating expensive equipment. They felt that by covering community events and issues on their own, they were fulfilling their obligation to provide "community programming." Similarly, where access channels were programmed by local universities, as in Potsdam, Fredonia and Plattsburgh, the university required that equipment be operated by students.

This is not what is meant by *access*. While this type of programming is certainly valuable, it does not encourage people to use the technology to communicate directly, and establishes a climate in which any community programming is at the discretion and beneficence of the cable operator. It also limits the amount of programming by limiting the number of producers to cable company staff (often a small staff) or a student body.

There was an average of only five hours of access programming on systems where "access" equipment was actually operated by the cable operator, compared with an average of 13.25 hours overall for all systems with equipment.

Sharing Equipment

Where access was run primarily by the cable operator, equipment used for access was often also used for other kinds of local programming such as Local Origination, leased access, government or educational access. In 29 of the 48 systems providing equipment, the equipment was shared with at least one of these entities. Almost all the access facilities that shared equipment (27 out of 29) shared it with the cable company's Local Origination productions. In fact, it was often used by more than one of these entities.

When equipment was shared for more than one purpose, conflicts were liable to arise. Allie Eberhardt, Director of Programming at Adams Russell Cable Services in Nassau County, reported that no conflicts arose among access, Local Origination, and leased access users because of "good planning." However, only 8% of access programming on this system was produced with the cable operator's equipment.

Westchester Cable Company's access equipment was also shared with Local Origination and leased access. Jim Foley, Assistant to Program Director Ed Champagne, described use divided between the various entities as scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis with "not much conflict, though sometimes there is not enough equipment." Forty percent of the access programming on Westchester Cable was produced with the operator's equipment.

An extreme example of equipment sharing occurred at Cox Cable of New York, located on Long Island. All local programming — including local origination, leased access, educational, governmental and public access, as well as produc-

tions by the library and parks department — shared the same equipment. Roy Menton, the local programming director, compared the situation to "two families living in one house," and said, "It can get hairy and chaotic at times."

A number of systems intentionally kept equipment intended for access use separate from other productions. This division was easiest where the access facility was a separate entity, as in Woodstock, Schenectady and White Plains. However, it also existed in certain places where access was housed with the cable operator's other productions. At TKR Cable in Rockland County, five portable half-inch rigs using CCD cameras were available for access producers, while other local production was done with 3/4-inch equipment. While this raises concerns about access being ghettoized into technological inferiority, such an arrangement allowed for over double the number of portable rigs (compared to the average of two), and minimized conflict over use.

Charging for Equipment Use

Most systems that provided equipment provided it free of charge. However 25% of the cable systems charged for use of equipment. This varied from subsidized to purely commercial rental rates. Subsidized, or lower than commercial rates were charged by a number of the most developed access operations (such as those with access facilities distinct from the cable operator's main location), including some of those with the most hours of programming. Charging a non-prohibitive fee for equipment use, and/or a yearly membership fee, was considered useful in bringing in some money towards upkeep and purchase of equipment without discouraging access producer.

Charges for equipment use ranged widely. The Lockport Community Cable Commission, a municipally created non-profit access facility, charged $25 per hour for studio rental, $10 per day for a portable rig, $6 per hour for half-inch editing and $10 per hour for 3/4-inch editing. Grants for free equipment use were available for those who were unable to pay. Woodstock Access TV required a $5 membership fee, then provided studio equipment and production training free of charge. Members also received a monthly program guide for the Woodstock access channel. In the mid-range, TKR Cable charged $15 per day for its half-inch portable rigs — plus a $500 deposit — and $50 per hour for editing, while Group W of Manhattan charged $50 per hour for studio use, and Group W in Warwick charged $50 per hour for studio, $75 per day for a field rig, and $50 per hour for editing.

Other cable operators charged much higher rates, effectively discouraging equipment use by the general community. Orange County Cablevision charged $100 per hour for studio use, $1,000 per day for a field rig, and $40 per hour for editing. Not surprisingly, no access shows were produced there in our study year with the cable operator's equipment. International Cable, near Buffalo, charged $100 per hour for studio use, $150 per hour for a production van with two cameras (or $75 per hour for the van with one camera), and a relatively modest $25 per hour for editing. Twenty-five percent of the channel's access programming was produced with this equipment.

Other Equipment Resources

While we found certain clear relationships between the availability of equipment and total hours of access programming, the equation was complicated by the fact that some communities housed other major production facilities, in high schools, universities, libraries or media centers.

As half-inch equipment improves and becomes more common, users' own equipment also becomes an increasing resource. Almost all (81%) of the systems that provided equipment noted that people also used other facilities for access production.

Training

Of the 48 systems with equipment, 73% provided some sort of training for access producers. This training ran the gamut from sporadic, informal help from staff or volunteers to regular, multi-session courses on studio production, portable production and editing. Our interviews indicated that almost all systems that provided training required access producers to attend the

sessions before they were allowed to use equipment.

Schenectady Cablevision's access facility provided comprehensive training. Classes on portable and studio production were each conducted once a week for four weeks, with a new cycle beginning every other month. Editing training was provided by appointment. Adams Russell Cable of Nassau conducted its training in two parts, the first as a clas, and the second as a hands-on session during a production. UA/ Columbia Cablevision of Westchester held a six-session access workshop every month with a ten-person limit. Since 1980, over four hundred people had attended these workshops, and over 150 were active producers at the time of our study.

Fifteen systems held training sessions on weekday evenings, nine held them during weekdays, and only six held sessions on weekends. Those with weekend training were generally those with separate access operations, such as Woodstock and Larchmont-Mamaroneck TV, and the bigger systems such as those in Rochester, Syracuse and Ithaca. These systems averaged 25 hours of programming per week, among the most active systems with access.

Many systems provided free training , while others charged from $10 to $50 for each course. In Woodstock and Schenectady, people were required to be members of the access organization before they could attend the training. Adams Russell in Nassau provided free training to community residents who were subscribers, but charged $5 to residents who were not, and $50 for non-resident non-subscribers.

Conclusions

Most active access channels were in systems where equipment and training were provided. Ideally, access facilities included a studio with call-in capability and a live feed, and at least a couple of portable rigs and editing set-ups. Weekend and evening training sessions also seemed to correlate with more programming hours. Charges for equipment and training did not seem to be a hindrance if they were kept to reasonable, subsidized rates. Conflicts in equipment availability due to shared use seemed to be a problem in some systems, while others had managed to minimize them.

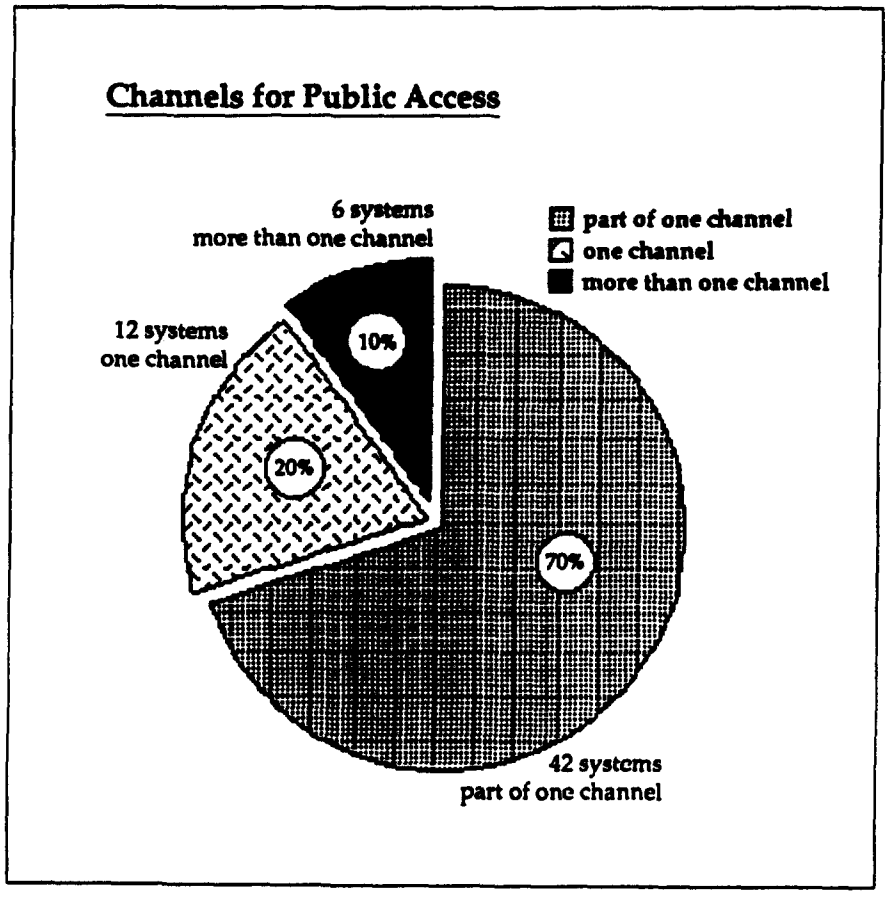
Chapter 6
Hours and Channels for Access

How many cable systems had access? Of the 141 systems responding to our survey, 76 had access and 65 did not. Of the 76 with access, 60 had had access programming in the previous year. Many of the systems without access were 12-channel systems, which had a lack of channel space available for local programming. Community Bulletin Boards were programmed by the majority of the systems that had access but no other access programming.

How much access programming played on the the state's access channels? Approximately 50% had one to ten hours per week, and one third programmed more than ten hours a week. This included slightly more than twenty communities in the state.

How these programs were scheduled also influenced the impact and presence access could have. Were access programs inserted into other channels, or did they have their own channel or time slot, clearly identified in the system programming line-up?

Eighteen systems set aside one channel or more specifically for access programs. This allowed the channels to have a clear identity and presence. There were local variations. A few systems reported that access had time on two separate channels. For example, Capitol Cable in Albany arranged for community institutions to program parts of two channels. The library programmed Monday and Thursday nights on Channel 9. Educational Access was programmed with the Learning Channel from 6 am to 4 pm on Channel 8, then Government Access was shown from 4 to 6 pm. The Westchester systems had one county-wide access channel and one channel in each municipality with local access. One system noted that while two channels were allotted to access, only one was used because the other interfered with local Fire Department signals.



The majority of the 76 systems with access (42) had less than one channel allotted to them. Most of these shared time with other local programming. In fact, a significant finding of this study is that systems with access tended to have other local programming as well, including company-produced LO programming, while systems without access tended to have no local programming at all.[1]

Access programming shared time, in order of precedence, with LO, educational or government access,

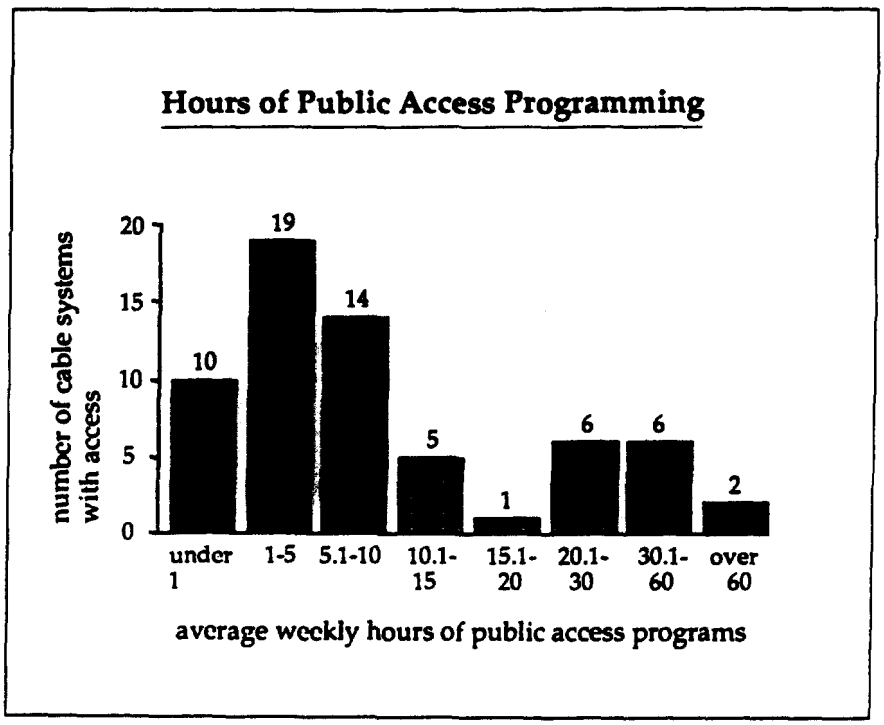
Community Bulletin Boards, and other programming (local Public Broadcasting channels and the Learning Channel were noted). Many systems with less than one channel for access combined access and other local programming without identifying which was which, so that these slots were just "community programming" slots.

Regular programming allows audiences to fit access into their viewing habits, knowing what is on and what to expect. One regular series can have an impact and create a presence in a community. Weekly, bi-weekly or monthly shows can all qualify for regular time-slots, depending on the cable system. One system required that a producer deliver ten to twenty completed programs in order to qualify for a regular slot. Others were less demanding.

Most systems in the state allowed regular scheduling of access programs, and these averaged a significantly higher amount of programming per week — roughly fifteen hours per week compared to five hours per week for those without this option. One third of the systems with access programming had a majority of regularly scheduled programs on their access channels, and these again showed more programming per week on average.

We did not address a related issue, that of repeat programming, or re-runs, in our questionnaire. One system noted, however, that they permitted programs to repeat either three times a day or three times a week, allowing scheduling for different audiences.

How access is scheduled also has an effect on the opportunity it has to build audiences.[2] Whether access was allotted less than or more than one channel, few systems ran enough hours of access programming to fill the channel 24 hours a day. Where access programming was regularly scheduled, blocks often were assigned desirable hours. Several systems programmed access during prime time evening hours: 6 to 9 pm, after 4 pm, 5 to 10 pm, 5 to 8 pm, usually weekdays, or including Saturday. One system noted an 11 am to 1 pm lunchtime slot as well.



Notes:

1. Over half of the systems with access programming also had LO programming. One system without access programming had LO; three had leased access; none of the rest had any local programming at all.

2. This data was collected in interviews. Formal statistics were not available.

Chapter 7
Outreach and Publicity

We have combined our discussions of outreach, publicity, listings and regular scheduling in this chapter because all deal with how people can find out about public access cable opportunities or programs. We define *outreach* and *publicity* as any activities conducted by access staff or volunteers to inform the public of the existence of public access to the cable system in their area, the availability of channel time, production resources or training. We define *listings* as any published record of scheduled titles, cablecast time and date, and, often, descriptions of individual programs or series.

Outreach

Why do we feel outreach is so important? Because the best access facilities and programming in the world are valueless if people don't know about them. A common complaint of potential access users we polled was that they didn't know about public access, where to find production resources or what was on the access channel. Also, access to television is a new concept for many people. The leap from speaking out at a School Board meeting or public hearing, writing a letter to a newspaper or legislator, or writing and distributing a leaflet — to creating an entire program for television is a large leap and intimidating for many people. Bombarded with fast-paced, technically sophisticated commercial television, many wonder how or if they or their organization could really produce TV.

So outreach and publicity have as their task not only to let the public know of the existence and opportunity of public access cable, but also how to show them how it can provide a practical, usable tool for communications and expression for ordinary citizens.

Eighteen cable systems of the 76 systems with public access in New York State (23.7%) conducted outreach activities for public access. Systems with outreach averaged 16 hours per week of access programs — double the eight hours per week of programming for systems with access but no outreach (and significantly higher than the average of ten hours per week for all systems with access programs last year).[1]

What kinds of outreach and publicity did we find in New York State? We found a variety of activities. Some access coordinators placed announcements (usually annual) in subscribers' bills ("bill stuffers"), placed ads in local newspapers, or distributed flyers to local retailers such as video stores, supermarkets, or the cable operator's office. Sammons in Cortland maintained a steady effort to promote public access, including news releases and announcements of training and special programs.

Others created notices for the channel itself. A few produced Public Service Announcements about access or particular programs on other cable channels. Some ran announcements on their Community Bulletin Board channel, or added information about access to the crawl line on the weather channel or TV channel guide. The staff at American Cablevision of Webster produced a five-minute tape combining clips of access shows and shots of the production facility, which they cablecast at the beginning or end of shorter access programs as a way to familiarize the public with local access opportunities.

Access programming itself was also used for outreach. To find the answers to her questions about access, a new access producer in Tarrytown invited her fellow producers to be guests on her first access program. She asked them to show clips of their programs and to explain how and why they used public access. Home viewers were also invited to call in their questions, and the result was a lively, informative program.

Person-to-person contact seemed particularly effective, including tours of public access facilities or special presentations for schools, community groups, town councils, social and service clubs, and public gatherings. Greg Babbit of Capitol Cable noted that several programs came out of the system's tours, including one show produced by and for a local group of hearing-impaired people. Lew Scharfberg, of Group W of Islip, mentioned the visibility of access crews. A show called "On the Street' not only asked and aired local opinion,

but was also a reminder of local access opportunities.

The new Larchmont-Mamaroneck access organization, LMC-TV, held regular "programming meetings" three to four times per year. In these meetings, community members as well as those already producing shows talked about what was currently on the channel and what they'd like to see. Advertised in newspaper ads and mailings, the meetings spread the word about access and encouraged new producers. Out of the fifty to sixty people who attended the meeting preceding our questionnaire, four or five became new producers.

LMC-TV, like several other active access centers, also published and distributed a newsletter with access program listings and short articles on production tips, new shows and producers, and announcements of training sessions.

One of the obstacles holding access staff back from conducting outreach activities was lack of time. Lockport Community Cable, a municipal access organization, solved this problem by creating a grant for one of its volunteer producers to do outreach and publicity for access. Some cable systems with access channels intentionally did not promote access. Orange County Cablevision listed five reasons for not encouraging access. To paraphrase the staff: (1) It's a commercial station. (2) Programs won't be professionally produced. (3) The Program Director doesn't have time to deal with access along with his other responsibilities. (4) The system doesn't need more programming. (5) Most people aren't interested when they find they have to pay for production equipment. (In this system, portable equipment, studio time and editing equipment were available for rent at commercial rates.)

In Orange County's example, it is clear that cable system support — or lack of support — for access (influenced, of course, by corporate policy) can determine whether there is outreach and how effective the chosen methods prove. We found that an individual access coordinator's enthusiasm could be crucial. When asked why access programming hours were increasing so much in his cable system, Brockport's access coordinator Steven Hullfish replied, "I've been encouraging everybody who calls to come in and make tapes, it's not so hard. I've been telling housewives who call that video equipment is easy. I can't work a washing machine, but I can work video equipment. The key is demystifying television."

Listings

Listings tell viewers "what's on" the channel. They also give visibility to access, and can help create an identity for the channel itself. This helps build an audience for access. Listings also are a way potential producers can find out that there is an access channel in their community, and that other people like themselves are using it to communicate with their neighbors, public officials and the larger community.

In a majority of the 76 cable systems with access in New York State (55.1%), access program listings of some sort were published. These cable systems averaged a significantly higher number of hours of access programming than those with access but without published listings (even without including the Manhattan systems). Systems with listings averaged 14.1 hours of programming in 1984, while those with programming but no listings averaged only 6.6 hours of access. It is unclear from this statistic and our interviews which is cause and which effect. Did more listings encourage more people to produce programs, or did systems with more programs want to publicize their accomplishment, or see access as a more comprehensive entity? Perhaps the two go hand in hand.

Systems listed access programs in various ways, each reaching a slightly different part of the community. Listings also differed in the amount of information they included, their frequency and the amount of lead time required. We asked cable systems if they provided access program listings in cable magazines, newspapers, TV channel guides, access newsletters, or other places.

Newspapers and TV channel guides were by far the most frequent places access programs were listed, used by 26 and 23 systems, respectively. Only five systems published access newsletters. These were, not surprisingly, among the most active systems, with the highest average hours of

programming. Somewhat surprising, however, was the relatively few number of systems that listed access in their cable guide magazines. From our interviews, two possible reasons for this were that many systems did not consider access part of their program offerings, or that the long lead time for cable magazine listing meant that only those with mostly regularly scheduled programs could use this outlet.

Listings in different media reach different publics and thus different potential viewers. Newspapers, for example, reach the general public. The TV channel guide and the cable magazine reach only cable subscribers, and access magazines often reach mostly access producers. Consequently, access programs, like other cable programs, are often listed in more than one medium.

Twenty-one systems with access listed access programs in more than one place, and fifteen listed them in more than two mediums. The more places access was listed, the more access programming there tended to be: an average of 10 hours per week for all systems with access programs, 14.1 hours per week for those with any listings, 16.7 hours per week for those with listings in more than one place, and 20.4 average hours of programming per week for those with more than two kinds of listings.

Series Scheduling

The option of regular scheduling — running a series — is important for access. TV viewers are often creatures of habit. A series that runs at the same time and day each week can build a regular audience — an audience as loyal as soap opera viewers. (Actually, some access programs are soaps.) Also, series are easier to publicize than randomly scheduled programs.

Nearly two thirds (63%) of systems with access provided regular time slots. Those with regular schedules averaged a much greater amount of weekly access programming than those without: 13.6 hours for those with regular scheduling versus only 1.9 hours for those without regular scheduling. This confirms the importance of regular scheduling for developing access programming and channels.

Many systems in our study did not provide or allow regular time slots for access. Instead, they often scheduled access programs around other programs. Other systems required access producers to deliver a stack of tapes to qualify for a regular slot — out of fears that the producers would not deliver on their promises and the time slot would be left empty, or to give programmers time to pre-screen material.

Support for Access and Hours of Access Programming

number of systems	avg. weekly hours of access programming	outreach	listings	regular scheduling	equipment
47	13.6			•	
42	14.1		•		
44	14.6				•
18	16.0	•			
17	16.9	•	•		
15	18.9	•	•	•	
14	20.0	•	•	•	•

As more kinds of support for access are considered, the number of systems that provided them declines. And not surprisingly, as more kinds of support are provided, the average amount of access program hours goes up. The above table shows the relationships between the number of systems that

provide outreach, listings, regular scheduling, and equipment, and the hours of access programming they produce.

Cable systems with access and any of these supportive mechanisms all averaged more hours of access weekly than those systems without supportive mechanisms. So it is clear that these supports — publicity, outreach, and production facilities — are vital to the development of access as a community communications system.

Notes:

1. According to their responses to our survey, neither of the New York City systems conducted outreach. However, as New York City residents, we have noted occasional efforts, such as a bill stuffer and a Public Service Announcement on how to fill out a program request card. The large number of access programs on these channels, despite the lack of outreach, is probably due to a combination of factors, some peculiar to New York City and some not, including the city's enormous population, the long history of access and active community video groups in the city, and the large number of media professionals and of people who have come to Manhattan to make their careers in communications and entertainment. Occasional outreach attempts by active community groups or individual cable access coordinators have also certainly helped.

Chapter 8
Funding For Access

How is public access funded in New York State? Funding for providing public access comes from a variety of sources, most anchored by cable company operating budgets or a portion of the cable system franchise fee provided to the municipality. Also, access coordinators and producers have been ingenious at developing other ways to support access programming.

Not all respondents to our survey completed all the questions on funding, so our data on this issue is incomplete. (However, we did glean more specific information on sources of funds from our interviews. Combining the data with our discussions with access coordinators and program managers, we can provide a glimpse of the ways access was funded in the state, if not a statistical breakdown of their relative significance.

Twenty respondents gave us budget figures for access; several figures include all community programming including company produced Local Origination, Community Bulletin Boards, educational and municipal access.

The table on sources and amounts of funding is divided into two parts because this seems to be the way that amounts of programming and funding levels, where available, seemed to indicate the clearest distinctions. The first part includes funds negotiated as part of a franchise. The second lists funds generated by other means.

Funds negotiated as part of a franchise include a percentage of the franchise fee allocated for access, an *extra service package* — or monies designated specifically for access and not part of the franchise fee, or other arrangements negotiated and included in the franchise beyond the regular franchise fee. These funds are all set out in the contract between the municipality and the cable company. While the exact arrangements vary, they seem to provide a basic level of support for access: These systems average twenty hours of programming weekly.

Franchise fees and extra service packages, negotiated as part of the cable franchise, were the main sources of substantial funds for access. For example, American Cablesystems of Tarrytown listed its entire budget of $175,000 as an extra service package from the company. This system averaged 33 hours per week of access programming. Jones Intercable in Lancaster paid a 3% franchise fee for access, plus some funds for equipment and maintenance and a part of a company building, for a portion of their $45,000 access budget.

Other sources of funds included other contributions from the cable system, fees for services, program underwriting, local donations and fundraising, arts council and other foundation support, and access organization membership, fundraising and events.

Some cable systems have contributed funds, equipment, staff time and supplies to access without any legal or contractual obligation to do so, because they saw it as an important public service or felt it improved their company's image. Some cable systems raised money for access through

Where do funds for access come from?

sources for cable systems	number of cable systems	percent of systems with access
cable operating budget	71	93%
municipal funds	2	3%
outside fundraising	19	25%
sources for producers		
access ctr. funds available	2	3%
outside funding allowed (grants, underwriting, etc.)	45	59%
all systems with access	76	

payments for production or other services, or through soliciting local funds and donations. As praiseworthy or useful as these means for raising funds may be, they do not in themselves seem to generate enough income to provide a stable base of support for access. In fact, some staff told us they simply did not have enough funds to do more access. Average weekly hours of access in these systems were 5.1 hours.

Shared support from other institutions tended to be limited to university-affiliated access centers. These received stable basic funding and produced large amounts of programming. Potsdam, through student-run WKSN, programmed an average of thirty hours a week, while Fredonia, in conjunction with SUNY Fredonia's Instructional Resource Center, averaged fifteen hours per week.

Local fundraising and grant support most often supplemented cable operator support. This combination generated the most support for access, although the amount of programming was roughly comparable to that where only franchise-guaranteed support was present. In these cases, creative thinking not only raised money but also increased visibility and community support. The Woodstock Valentine dance raised funds, was a much enjoyed party, and provided exposure to local musicians. Foundation support allowed access centers to conduct special programs for outreach to particular populations — for example, for seniors and youth at Lockport and for library programming in Guilderland.

How much support is enough, and what is a good base level of funding for access? Unfortunately, our survey did not glean enough data to answer these questions satosfactorily. In terms of what that money supported, much access in the state operated with one or two staff members, a studio and some portable equipment plus provisions for repair, office space, some supplies, and volunteers. Larchmont-Mamaroneck (part of UA/Columbia Westchester) gave us a rough indications of their budget, which paid for a part-time center located in a school, with half the equipment provided by the school district. The total was $34,000. On the other side, Syracuse Newchannels gave us a figure for the operation of their full-time Local Origination channels of $500,000 for one and a half years, or approximately $330,000 per year.